

# CALIFORNIA

## OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

### HOME HEALTH AIDES

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INTEREST AREA  
SOCIAL



#### WHAT DOES A HOME HEALTH AIDE DO?

HOME HEALTH AIDES help elderly, convalescent, or disabled persons in their own homes instead of a health facility. Some help discharged hospital patients who have relatively short-term needs. They work for licensed home care agencies and provide basic nursing care in private homes or hospice programs under the supervision of Registered Nurses. The number of people living into their eighties continues to grow, a group that usually has health problems that need at least some assisted medical care. These people prefer to stay in their own dwelling where they are more independent, comfortable, and where the cost is usually lower than nursing home rates.

Home Health Aides provide health-related services. They teach patients ways to care for themselves despite illness or disability. Home Health Aides help keep patients mentally alert by talking and listening to them. They also may care for children of their sick or disabled patient.

Home Health Aides are also called Home Care Workers, Homemaker Health Aides or Home Attendants.

Home Health Aides perform the following tasks:

- Check and record pulse, blood pressure, and breathing rates.
- Coordinate patient care with other members of the health care team.
- Keep records of patient care and report changes to nurse supervisors.
- Teach patients how to get along independently.
- Change bed linens, wash and iron laundry, and clean patient's quarters.
- Help the patient move about the house, bathe, and use the toilet or bedpan.
- Shop for food, and fix and serve meals to patients and sometimes to other family members.
- Entertain patients by talking, reading, and playing cards or other games with them.
- May use cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if needed.

#### WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Home Health Aides include:

- Service Orientation – Actively looking for ways to help people.

- Social Perceptiveness – Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react the way they do.
- Active Listening – Giving full attention to others to understand what they are saying without interrupting them, and asking questions at suitable times.
- Customer and Personal Service – Knowledge of ways and means to give customer and personal service, including how to know what they want or need, how to give it to them, and ways to evaluate their feedback.
- Basic Nursing Care Practices – Knowledge of the information and methods needed to treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities.
- Oral Comprehension – The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
- Oral Expression – The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
- Static Strength – The ability to exert maximum muscle force to lift, push, pull, or carry heavy objects.

### WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Home Health Aides work in patient homes where other family members may live. They also work in hospice places caring for patients who are dying. They need the ability to deal calmly and good-naturedly with patients who may be in pain, uncooperative, or depressed. In addition, Aides sometimes have unpleasant duties such as emptying bedpans, collecting urine or stool specimens, and changing soiled linens.

Home Health Aides may go to the same patient's home for months or even years. However, most Aides work with a number of different patients, each job lasting a few hours, days, or weeks. They may spend a good portion of the working day traveling from one patient to another. Mechanical lifting devices are seldom available in patient homes, and Home Health Aides can sustain injuries resulting from positioning patients.

They need a valid California driver's license and usually need access to a car.

### Union Membership

Home Health Aides working for hospital-based programs can join the Health Care Workers division of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

### WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID):

Home Health Aides	
Estimated number of workers in 2002:	38,300
Estimated number of workers in 2012:	55,300
Projected Growth 2002-2012:	44.4%
Est. openings due to separations by 2012:	5,000

*These figures do not include self-employment.*

This occupation will grow much faster than average compared with all occupations in California. Total job opportunities between the years 2002 and 2012 will be 22,000.

### Trends

This occupation is among the top 25 fastest growing occupations in California. This high rate of growth is expected to continue.

The employment outlook for experienced Home Health Aides is very good. The occupation also provides good opportunities for job seekers who want a short training period and for those who want part-time or temporary work.

### WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

#### California Earnings

The following information is from the Occupational Employment Statistics Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID:

Home Health Aides 2005 Wages		
Hourly wages range from	\$7.96	to \$10.65
Average hourly wage	\$9.56	
Average annual wage	\$19,897	

*These figures do not include self-employment.*



The above wages are Statewide averages. However, wages depend on the kind of employer and can vary greatly. Home Health Aides working in hospital programs in larger metropolitan areas can earn wages as high as \$13.00 to \$16.00 or more per hour, according to a hospital-based home care organization with programs in several Northern California cities.

### **Hours**

Home Health Aides may work full-time, part-time, or on-call, depending on patient needs. Full-time certified Home Health Aides normally visit five or six patients per day and spend about one to two hours with each patient per visit. Many agencies hire only on-call hourly workers with no extra benefits except for paid mileage. Other agencies hire Home Health Aides on a full-time or part-time basis and with a guaranteed minimum number of hours. They may work evenings, weekends, and holidays.

### **Benefits**

Depending on the hiring agency, benefits for full-time workers usually include vacation, sick leave, and medical and dental insurance. Some employers also pay for vision, life insurance, and retirement plans.

## **HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?**

First decide if this is the kind of work you want to do. Job satisfaction and willingness to stay on the job usually comes from doing work that holds your interest. People who like Home Health Aide work usually have a social interest. This means they truly like to help others, talk to them, teach them how to do things, and provide services.

### **Education and Training**

A high school diploma is not required to work as a Home Health Aides. However, Home Health Aides must take classroom and clinical training approved by the State Department of Health Services, Aide and Technician Certification Section (ATCS).

Course content includes basic nutrition, meal planning and cooking, home cleaning tasks, and

ways for bathing, turning, and moving the patient. Home Health Aides also learn to deal with patients' emotional problems caused by illness or aging and learn something about behavior, particularly in elderly patients.

Adult education programs and regional occupational programs (ROP) in many local school districts give Home Health Aides training. In addition, some private career schools and colleges train for this occupation. The local EDD One-Stop Career Center can help find training. Look in the telephone directory under State government pages, or visit the Web site at [www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop/osfile.pdf](http://www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop/osfile.pdf).

### **Licensing and Certification**

To work in California, Home Health Aides need a Home Health Aide certificate issued by the State Department of Health Services.

Before signing up for training, it is very important to know about the health and background screening requirements for Home Health Aides training and certification. Contact a local school that offers Home Health Aide training to set up a pre-screening interview.

Applicants for training and certification need:

- A medical report that gives medical history and states that the applicant can do the work without harm to self, patients and family members, or visitors.
- Results of physical examination from a doctor, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner.
- Results of a tuberculosis skin (a chest x-ray may be needed if skin test is positive).
- No felony or certain misdemeanor convictions. However, an applicant who has a Certificate of Rehabilitation or Dismissal from the county court where the conviction happened can be certified to do this work.
- A Home Health Aide application, fingerprint records, and fees to the ATCS section of the State Department of Health Services. The school usually sends this application package for students as soon as they enroll in training.

- 120 hours of ATCS approved training. Training includes 65 hours of classroom and 55 hours of supervised clinical training in basic nursing and home health topics.

Students have the option of taking a combined Certified Nurse Assistant/Home Health Aide program. Nurse assistants with current certification who want a Home Health Aides certificate can take a 40-hour supplemental training program.

### ***Continuing Education***

Health care agencies that employ Home Health Aides must give them at least 12 hours of in-service training and do a performance review each year. Home Health Aides have to renew their certification every two years.

### **HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?**

Home health agencies and hospice programs hire Home Health Aides. Recent graduates can apply at their school for job placement. Many go to work for the agency where they did clinical on-the-job training. They should also apply at a local Visiting Nurses Association of America.

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Home Health Aides work in the health care industry. Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- Assisted Living Facilities
- Home Health Services
- Hospices
- Nurses and Nurses Registries

The following Internet resources can be helpful to the job search process:

America's Career InfoNet  
[www.acinet.org](http://www.acinet.org)

America's Job Bank  
[www.ajb.dni.us](http://www.ajb.dni.us)

CalJOBS<sup>SM</sup>  
[www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov)

Job Search and Resume Writing  
[www.worksmart.ca.gov/success\\_tips\\_menu.html](http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/success_tips_menu.html)

Local Job Service Offices  
[www.edd.ca.gov/jsrep/jsloc.htm](http://www.edd.ca.gov/jsrep/jsloc.htm)

Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) Online  
<http://online.onetcenter.org>

One-Stop Career Centers List  
[www.edd.ca.gov/ONE-STOP/pic.htm](http://www.edd.ca.gov/ONE-STOP/pic.htm)

For statewide and local projections, wages, employers by county, and other occupational information go to [www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov](http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov) and select *Find an Occupation Profile*.

### **WHERE CAN THE JOB LEAD?**

With more training, Home Health Aides can become Medical Assistants, Licensed Vocational Nurses, or Registered Nurses.

### **OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Department of Health Services  
Health and Human Services Agency  
Aide and Technician Certification Section  
1800 3rd Street, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 94234-7320  
(916) 327-2445  
[www.dhs.ca.gov/lnc/cert/default.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/lnc/cert/default.htm)

Visiting Nurse Associations of America  
99 Summer Street, Suite 1700  
Boston, MA 02110  
(617) 737-3200  
[www.vnaa.org](http://www.vnaa.org)

### **RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES**

Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners	No. 29
Licensed Vocational Nurses	No. 313
Nursing Aides and Orderlies	No. 442
Physical Therapy Aides and Assistants	No. 451



## OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

**SOC** (*Standard Occupational Classification*)

Home Health Aides 31-1011

**O\*NET** (*Occupational Information Network*)

Home Health Aides 31-1011.00

**OES** (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)

Homes Health Aides 66011